THE NATURE AND STATUS OF RECOLLECTION (SMṚTI) IN THE NYĀYA-VAIŚEṢIKA PHILOSOPHY.

By

Dr. C. N. Mishra.

Recollection is not a valid cognition in the Nyāya system of philosophy. It has divided cognition (*jñāna*) into two, *viz*. presentative cognition or original apprehension (*anubhava*) and recollection (*smaraṇa*). The former is a valid cognition (*pramā*) but the latter, inspite of its sub-division into right (*yathārtha*) and wrong (*ayathārtha*) one, is not entitled to be called a valid cognition ; for, it does not possess the vividness and the presentative character of a direct or original apprehension. That is to say, it does not arise from the contact of the object itself. Recollection gives us recognition and not the original cognition of the object which in the past was, of course, directly presented to the senses. Vātsyāyana has observed that recollection is only the re-cognition by the same perceiver of the previously perceived thing and that it (i.e., recollection) appears in the form—'I have cognitzed this object before.' In a word, when a perceiver recognizes what he had cognized before his re-cognition is called recollection.[1]

The Nyāya system of thought is in conformity with the modern impressionist psychology as regards the theory of memory. The author of the *Nyāya Bhāṣya* has stated quite explicitly that it is not the cognition itself but the impression produced by the cognition that is responsible for bringing about recollection.[2] Soul possesses a power of conservation by virtue of which the knowledge already acquired is retained and preserved somehow in it so as to be of use in future when congenial conditions are satisfied. The representation of what had already been acquired involves a process by which the traces of past perceptions accumulated in the soul are stirred up and revived and are consequently brought forth in the form of ideas and images. 'This can take place in two ways. The form and order of the revived images may exactly correspond

1. Smaranam ca khalu pūrvajñātasya samānena jñātrā grahanam 'ajñāsisam amum artham jneyam' iti.
   So'yam eko jñāta pūrvajñātam artham grihnāti tac cā'sya grahanam smaranam iti. —NBhā, 3. 2. 41.
2. Of Smriti's ca lingam buddhyavasthāne-samskārasya buddhijasya smritihetutvat | NBhā, 3. 2. 44.

to those of the original percepts, or they may be entirely different, the original percepts being taken to pieces and their elements rearranged in a new order in the images.'[3] The author of *Tarkāmṛta* has, however, asserted that the truth and falsity of recollection are dependent on those of the corresponding presentative cognitions.[4] There is an obvious difference between these two views though on the surface they appear similar to each other. And, it is worthy of note that the view of Modern Psychology is more suggestive and convincing than the Nyāya view on this issue. If the truth of recollection (*smṛti*) depend upon the truth of the original apprehension (*anubhava*) an objection may rightly be raised. Suppose the original apprehension was true but the impression left by it is distorted or partially effaced by lapse of time. Then the remembrance would obviously be mutilated and hence false, although the original apprehension (*anubhava*) itself was right. Or, suppose both the apprehension and the impression left by it were genuine, but owing to the intervention some accidental factors, such as want of a proper suggestive force (*udbodhaka*) or the presence of an obstruction or inattention, the recollection does not fully agree with the original apprehension. So inspite of the genuine character of an apprehension and the impression left by it the recollection produced by them in this case cannot be called a true recollection (*yathārthasmṛti*). Again, dreams are supposed to be of the nature of recollection (*smaraṇātmaka*) since they are often produced by the actual experience of the things perceived in the past. Why are then dreams considered to be invariably false ? These objections, however, have no applicability to the conception of memory as held by the Modern Psychology which in its implication upholds that every case of memory requires to be verified with the form and order of the elements of the object cognized in the past.

It deserves mention in this connection that unlike criteria or tests have been adopted by the philosophers to check the validity of direct apprehension on the one hand and that of recollection on the other. Since, recollection being a mediate cognition it is not directly connected with objects as direct or immediate apprehension is. Recollection is a mediate cognition on account of its being based upon a original apprehension.[5] It is separated both in respect of time and place from the original

---

3. Psychology, p. 110.
4. Pūrvānubhavasya yathārthatvāyathārthatvābhyām smaranam api ubhayarūpam bhavati. TA, p. 11.
5. Cf. NB, p. 28.

apprehension, so the criterion of validity applicable to direct cognitions is generally not available in the case of recollection. To take a concrete instance : when we believe we are seeing water, we can atonce verify the truth of our perception by actually touching or drinking the water. But when we only remember to have seen water sometime back and at a distant place, it is absolutely impossible for us to go to the place in the past time and verify the truth of our recollection. Hence a different test of truth is applied to recollection. This test which attests the validity of a cognition on the ground of the correctness or truth of its corresponding original apprehension is in fact applicable to all the varieties of mediate cognition. Thus the validity of inferential knowledge depends on the validity of the synthetic cognition (*Parāmarśa*) which is universally avowed as perceptual in character, while the truth of verbal knowledge depends on the correct knowledge of the sentence *(vākya)*. But on account of this very dependence are inferential and verbal knowledge considered as devoid of the criterion of validity (apramā) ? So the mere dependence of memory on an original apprehension (as the Naiyāyikas hold) may not be a sufficient ground for denying validity (*pramātva*) to recollection.

The Vaiśeṣika, however, avoids these objections since it has described *pramāṇa* as the organ of valid cognition which is common to both, presentative cognition as well as to recollection.[6] It definitely admits recollection as a distinct variety of valid cognition *(pramāṇa)* like perception and inference. The Nyāya has confined valid cognition to the presentational knowledge only but the Vaiśeṣika has included recollection also in it. Prasaśtapāda has clearly mentioned recollection to be a variety of *Vidyā* which has been divided into four distinct types.[7] Recollection as such is in no sense a case of nescience *(avidyā)* according to the Vaiśeṣika system of thought. This has been made all the more clear by Saṁkara Miśra in his celebrated work *Upaskāra.* After fully dealing with *pratyakṣa*, *laingika*, *smṛti* and *ārṣa* he has stated[8] *totidem verbis* : 'Thus four-fold true cognition *(vidyā)* having been explained it is now proper to explain nescience *(avidyā)*.'

The author of *Tarkasaṁgraha* has described recollection as the knowledge born of a mental impression alone.[9] This particular kind of of impression *(saṁskāra)* is called *bhāvanā*. It is something like an image

6. Smrityanubhavasādhāranam pramākaranam pramānam. Tattvakaumudī, p. 6 (as quoted in NTK, p. 55).
7. PBhā, p. 552.
8. Vide U, 9. 2. 7.
9. Samsakāramātrajanyam jñānam smritih. TS, p. 28.

left back by an immediate apprehension. This *bhāvanā-saṁskāra* may be considered as mental operation since it is responsible for the production of recollection. To be more precise, it is an intermediary force, a *tertium quid* between the remote cause apprehension *(anubhava)* and its effect recollection *(smṛti)*. The mental operation mentioned above is, therefore, a link between the remote cause and its effect in the present context. It is to be also noted here that this link *viz., bhāvana* in the case of recollection becomes prolonged by a considerable interval of time.

It will not be out of place to consider here the point of difference between recollection *(smṛti)* and recognition *(pratyabhijñā)*. The difference between them consists in the absence or presence of the thing remembered. A concrete instance will make the point clear. When a man, who has seen an elephant with a driver on its back, sees either the elephant or the driver alone and at once remembers the other one his knowledge is said to be a case of recollection. This knowledge is solely due to the impression that had been left on the man's mind since he saw the elephant with a driver on its back on some previous occasion. In this context, the thing which brings back to the mind the memory of the absent object by the law of association is called the suggestive force or the reviver *(udbodhaka)* of the impression *(saṁsakāra)* adverted to above. In recognition, on the other hand, the object remembered is actually before the senses. The novelty of the knowledge consists only in the identity of the object now perceived with the one previously perceived, as when on perceiving Mr. X one remembers that it is the same Mr. X whom one saw before. Here the actual perception of Mr. X is as much the cause of knowledge as the impression left on the mind by a former perception. So, really speaking, recognition *(pratyabhijñā)* is not produced by impression alone *(saṁskāramātrajanya)* but it is originated by impression in association with direct perception (*pratyakṣasahakṛtasaṁsakārajanya*). In the case of recollection the impression is directly revived by the force of suggestion of a thing while in the case of recognition the impression of an object first produces remembrance of identity. And then this remembrance of identity between the selfsame past and present object engenders the recognition that identity resided in the object actually perceived. As it will be beyond the scope of our present enquiry we abstain from a lengthy consideration of this problem.

Incidentally we propose to advert to a point which deserves mention. The author of *The Nyāya Theory of knowledge* has observed "Memory-knowledge is both true and definitely believed to be true. Still it is not *pramā*, since it is not presentative but representative cognition.",

This opinion is just in correspondence with the Nyāya view. But in his enthusiasm for making a clear distinction between apprehension (*anubhava*) and recollection (*smṛti*) the learned author has made an attempt to probe deep into the bottom of the matter and has formulated a tentative definition for *anubhava* which is suggestive no doubt, but seems somewhat deviated from the view of the system of philosophy under consideration.[10] We fail to understand how '*anubhava* is knowledge other than memory' is 'just to beg the question' as has been argued by the learned doctor. The negative definition of *anubhava* in the text is due to the fact that it is a simple ultimate operation of the mind which is at the bottom of all other mental operations including the act of defining itself. Besides, a definition of *anubhava* is really unnecessary as by simply excluding *smṛti*, *qua* repeated knowledge, the definition of *jñāna* itself serves for the rest, *viz. anubhava*. According to the author in question 'some Naiyāyikas' are begging the question so far the definition of *anubhava* is concerned, but that 'the matter has not been left there.' He means to say that atleast the author of *Saptapadārthī* does justice to the definition of *anubhava* by not begging the question. But it will be interesting to note that the text concerned does beg the question (of course, in *his* sense) when it defines that apprehension is a cognition which is not of the form of recollection.[11] Perhaps the author of the book, *The Nyāya Theory of Knowledge* has overlooked it and has focussed his attention to a point which is not actually going to serve his purpose. For instance, when the author of *Saptapadārthī* observes, '*Tattvam anāropitaṁ, rupaṁ, tasya jñānam anubhavaḥ*', it goes without saying that his intention here is not to define *anubhava* as such, as it appears from the interpretation of the author of *The Nyāya Theory of Knowledge*. The text in this sentence is directly concerned with the *cansa sine qua non* of the highest good which is evident from the context : '*Eteṣāṁ tattvajñānaṁ niḥśreyase hetuḥ*.' It is clear that the second sentence here has been inserted only to analyse the compound word *tattvajñānam* and not to give a definition of *anubhava* with which the text is only indirectly concerned in this context. Had it been otherwise, the author would not have taken trouble to formulate the actual definition of *anubhavn* in a different section. So avoiding the defect of repetition we must conclude that the definition of *anubhava* as given by Śivāditya is not what the author of *The Nyāya Theory of Knowledge* has indicated. In order to clarify the meaning the text has only substituted synonymous words for the words constituting the single word *tattvajñāna* which means

10. Vide NTK; p. 51.

11 Asmritirūpam jñānam anubhavaḥ. SP. 139.

the knowledge of the Essence. *Tattva* means Reality, free from superimposition. *Jñāna* means apprehension (*anubhava*). And the genetive compound (*ṣaṣṭhītatpuruṣa*) has been indicated by the insertion of the word 'of' (*tasya*). In this way, the author of *Saptapadārthī* has established the equation : Knowledge of the Essence (*tattvajñānam*) = Apprehension of the Reality which is free from superimposition. The net result of the above consideration is that the purpose of the text under review is not at all to define *anubhava* but to make easily understandable what is meant by the expression *tattvajñānam*. After this long digression let us return to our subject proper. We have studied and examined so far the Nyāya view of recollection. Now we address ourselves to the consideration of this problem in the Vaiśeṣika philosophy. Recollection (*smṛti*) in the Vaiśeṣika system, unlike that in the Nyāya school of thought, has been recognized as a variety of authentic or valid cognition (*pramāṇa*).[12] Recollection, in this system is one of the varieties of truth or veridical cognition (*vidyā*). Kaṇāda, the original expounder of the Vaiśeṣika system has formulated a separate aphorism to explain the nature of recollection.[13] The aphorism lays down explicitly that recollection is occasioned by a particular conjunction between the soul and the mind and also by impression. It is worthy of note that the insertion of the particle 'also' ((*ca*) and what follows in the aphorism signifies the impression of past experience which also is one of the two constituent factors of recollection *qua* composite cognition.

Śrī Vallabhācārya, the celebrated author of the *Nyāyalīlāvatī*, has maintained that recollection is a specific variety of authentic cognition,[14] since it is a cognition which is of the nature of unwavering certitude of an object. It cannot be contented that as recollection is dependent on a direct cognition so it cannot be considered as an independent type of cognition by its own right ; since this dependence on an additional veridical cognition is encountered in the inferential cognition also. It is an avowed fact that synthetic judgement (*parāmarśa*) serves as the basis upon which the inferential cognition takes its rise.[2] And this fact renders it evident that so far the aspect of dependence is taken into account recollection stands on a par with inferential cognition. So there is not the slightest warrant for investing arbitrarily the status of true

12. Smritis ca vaisesikanaye buddhyantargatavidyāprabhedah. Vide-NK, p. 1045.
13. Ātmamanasoh samyogavisesāt samsakārāc ca smritih. VSU, 9. 2. 6.
14. Cf. Smritir api mānāntaram eva. NL, p. 620.
15. Anubhavapāratantryān na'ivam iti cet. Na. Utpattipāratantryasya pramāṇāntarasāmyāt-Ibid.

cognition to one and divesting the other. It is also equally untenable that the specific feature of dependence of recollection as a resultant awareness consists in the fact that the securing of its content is dependent on the previous direct cognition. That is to say, the content of the latter is taken stock of by the former. Recollection in its fundamental character is debarred from laying hold on a content of its own in utter disregard of the content of the occasioning antecedent direct cognition. And the pendency of recollection in this aspect will act as a prevention in the matter of assigning to it the rank of an independent cognitive organ. But this objection is based on the partial ignorance of the opponent. If recollection is not held to be conversant about its content by its own intrinsic capacity then it will forfeit its right to be called a cognition at all. Consequently, it will be relegated to the footing of desire which due to its lack of an independent content beyond and besides that of its generating cognition is normally held to be non-cognitive in character.[16]

Again it has been urged that the criterion of true cognition (*pramā*) is that it must be conversant about a content which was not known previously by any other accredited cognitive organ. But recollection is rightly and inexorably delimited to the content which was apprehended antecedently by a recognized organ. So the non-compliance with this fundamental factor undermines the authenticity of recollection as a species of veridical cognition. But this objection too is based on a flimsy ground. It is an unimpeachable fact that in a series of successive cognitions the second member takes stock of the content which is already known by the initial member of the series. Thereore, the second, third and the fourth member in the series of successive cognition are bereft of the element of novelty, so far the question of content is concerned and as such cannot be allowed to share status with the first member.[17] So this *tu quoque* mode of argument finally clinches the issue and places the provative value of recollection beyond the domain of dispute. Moreover, a mature reflection will render it evident that recollection is not entirely lacking in novelties. The elemeut of *thatness* (*tattā*) which is invariably felt in it brings into limelight its authentic character. 'I recollect *that* pencil' and 'I recollect *that* pen' are the concrete instances of recollection

16. Icchāvadvisaye parāpekṣāyām jñānatvavyāghātah. Ibid., pp. 620, 61.

17. Anadhikaparicchedasya grihītānubhavasādhāranyāt. Ibid., p. 621.
See also NLK thereon : Nanu grihītamātragocaratvan ne'yam pratit'r ity'ata āha 'anadhik' eti. Evam sati dhārāvagāhi dhirayām api pramititvam na syād ity' arthah.

in which the element of *thatness* which is invariably felt brings into lime-light the presence of the element of novelty in them. This *thatness* cannot be the content of the occasioning cognition of it which is infallibly referential to the element of *thisness* as is demonstrated in the instances 'I perceive *this* pencil' and 'I perceive *this* pen.' So there is no room for doubt that recollection also brings in novelties and yields new information regarding its content which was not accorded by its generating cognition.
